



# **Residential Traffic Administration Program (RTAP) Resource Guide**

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**Fairfax Families for Safe Streets**

**February 2024**

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## Introduction

This guide will give you an idea of what to expect in the **Residential Traffic Administration Program (RTAP)** process, primarily focusing on the “traffic calming” method. We’ve provided references to the Fairfax County resources and provided our perspective based on experiences with Fairfax County communities.

We’ve also provided a Resource List compiled by a community that successfully completed a traffic calming initiative in Reston, VA. You are welcome to use/adapt any of these materials for your neighborhood.

Please ask us questions, ask for support and let us know how we can help you. For more information: [chris@novafss.org](mailto:chris@novafss.org)

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## Overview

The Residential Traffic Administration Program (RTAP) is administered by the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT). The purpose of the program is to work with communities to decrease the impacts of traffic and enhance safety in area neighborhoods.

The RTAP program uses the following methods to achieve its goals:

1. Traffic Calming
2. Cut-Through Mitigation
3. \$200 Fine for Speeding Signs
4. Watch for Children (WFC) Signs
5. Through Truck Restrictions

To initiate the process, the community sends a request to its District Supervisor, who forwards it to FCDOT. FCDOT then conducts a traffic study to determine if the road qualifies.

### Fairfax County Resources

RTAP web site:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/residential-traffic-administration>

RTAP process steps and method overview:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/sites/transportation/files/Assets/documents/PDF/Parking/RTAP-Chart-2019.pdf>

RTAP program method details:

<http://www.virginia-dot.org/programs/is-VDOTCommunityPrograms.asp>

## What You Need to Know About the RTAP Process

The steps listed in the [Reference Chart](#) are helpful for understanding the process. We'll go into the details for how you can prepare for success.

### Building Your Team

The RTAP process requires a big commitment of time and energy. You'll be hard pressed to do this all yourself – especially if you're working and/or raising a family. We've found that between contacting and following up with government officials and staff and developing community presentations and communications, the entire process may require hundreds of hours from start to finish. If your street qualifies for the program, you will need 4-5 neighborhood members to serve on a **task force**. The more people you find who are willing to help the better.

The task force has many responsibilities. You may feel that you do not know how to do them. That's OK! Previous community activism experience is helpful, but not at all necessary.

You will, however, need time and money to complete the steps. Fairfax Families for Safe Streets is here to help you navigate the process.

### Starting the Process

The process is initiated by submitting a petition to your District Supervisor. This request can be made by a homeowner's association or a civic association. If your neighborhood has neither, you can use either 10 residences or 10% of residences along the street. This petition can be as simple as "We the undersigned residents of \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby petition FCDOT for \_\_\_\_\_ (choice of options) for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of road.)"

Minimum speed limits and vehicle volume are noted in the RTAP Quick Reference Chart. You may not know if your street has the correct traffic volume of between 500 and 6,000 vehicles per day to qualify. Do not let this deter you as FCDOT's traffic study will include a traffic count.

It may help you to identify a reliable and supportive contact on the District Supervisor's staff. If you can't find someone, you'll need to follow up with whomever you speak to in the office.

### The Traffic Study and Calming Plan

Following the traffic study, FCDOT will develop a conceptual traffic calming plan. Once this plan is developed it is the task force's responsibility to contact property owners if a physical device (such as a speed hump) is planned to be placed directly adjacent to their property's boundaries. These affected property owners are required to sign off on the device. This step can be a challenge because property owners may worry about noise or reduced parking. However, the process can only move forward after you obtain these signatures. Each property owner can be

contacted separately, or a meeting with all affected property owners may be held to gauge general support of the need for action. Refer to the RTAP Resources section of this document, or the [Fairfax FSS RTAP website](#), if you are interested in reviewing an example of a presentation given to affected property owners to achieve buy-in.

Note that property owners may live elsewhere. You can find their information at <https://icare.fairfaxcounty.gov/ffxcare/Main/Home.aspx>

If you are unable to get sign off on FCDOT's suggested plan, do not give up. There may be a different configuration of devices that can be placed close to the properties of receptive property owners. Continue to work with your District Supervisor and FCDOT until you have a plan that affected property owners will approve.

Note that, although you may be told that the selection of devices is individual to what your community wants, Fairfax County's recently released [Mobility and Transportation dashboard](#) shows that 85% of installed devices are speed humps and speed tables. If your effort includes speed humps you may find that people who are against speed humps are actually against speed bumps. Refer to the RTAP Resources section of this document, or the [Fairfax FSS RTAP website](#), to learn more about the differences between speed humps and speed bumps. Also note that you can request speed humps with cutouts for emergency vehicles. This type of speed hump helps mitigate the worry that emergency vehicles will have slower response times.

#### Traffic Calming and Cut Through Mitigation Approval Process

Of the 5 RTAP methods, traffic calming and cut through mitigation require the most effort because community voting approval is needed. The other solutions do not require a community vote and proceed based only Board of Supervisors' (BOS) approval.

You will need enormous neighborhood support for the plan to pass. You can choose to start building support by raising awareness about the problem before obtaining signatures. However, you can only move forward with a plan that the affected property owners have already approved. Collecting a slew of ideas of what people think would mitigate the problems is of limited value. It's better to have one or two ideas that people can unify around.

Once you have obtained signatures you will need to obtain wider neighborhood support. The program requires 50% of all occupied properties in FCDOT's ballot area to vote "Yes." Not voting counts as a "No" vote. Note that the task force determines whether or not renters can vote in lieu of property owners living elsewhere. Be sure to consider whether those living in the affected area are more likely to be aware of the problems than those not living nearby.

There are a variety of communication and education tactics that you can use to obtain community support. Refer to the RTAP Resources section of this document, or the [Fairfax FSS RTAP website](#), to view a previously-developed website for an RTAP traffic calming project,

including FAQs from the neighborhood. You are welcome to use and/or modify the information in these FAQs for your plan.

The balloting area chosen by FCDOT can be extremely large and it is unlikely you will know many/most of the people who are included. Use your homeowners' association or civic association if you have one to build a contact list. If not, use social media, email groups, the web site, lawn signs, or mailing lists. If you are physically able and comfortable doing so, going door-to-door with handouts and information is a very effective approach. Be aware that you are not allowed to put anything in people's mailboxes, but instead must leave literature at the door. The more people who help you with this step the better.

Note that neither your District Supervisor nor FCDOT will help you with community outreach. It is entirely up to the task force to generate support. You must pay printing costs, etc. This step can take a good deal of time. Don't get frustrated! You and your team are doing the best you can with a difficult and time-consuming process.

Remember: Your street qualified for the program. This means that it is dangerous. You are not overreacting by wanting something done. And, always remember that the loudest opinions in the neighborhood are not necessarily indicative of the majority of voices.

When you feel you have raised awareness and gathered support, it's time to hold a community meeting. This can be done virtually or in person. Finding a good time and date may require a bit of guess work. Make your choice based on what you know about best time of year, holidays, school calendars, vacation periods, and so forth for most people. Be sure to ask for accommodation well in advance for those in the neighborhood who need to be engaged.

At the meeting FCDOT will present the plan and answer questions. The task force may present their own information as well. Be prepared to hear negative and potentially hurtful comments at the meeting. Refer to the RTAP Resources section of this document, or the [Fairfax FSS RTAP website](#), to review and an example of a community meeting presentation slide deck, as well as this recording of such a meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC8oW7ymQOw>. Again, note that FCDOT will not indicate support for the plan at this meeting. It is entirely up to you to stress the importance of increasing safety.

After the community meeting, the task force decides whether to amend the plan, stop the process, or proceed to a community vote. This may not be an easy decision because you may not know for sure whether you have enough support.

## Voting

FCDOT voting rules state that if the vote fails, the neighborhood must wait an additional two years before trying again, even if someone is seriously injured or killed after the first vote. We have been unable to obtain data from FCDOT on what percentage of initiatives pass or fail or end before the vote opens.

There are a number of rules to follow when conducting the vote. Be sure to read them carefully so votes don't get thrown out. You will receive a template of a ballot from FCDOT. This template is generic, should be adapted for your situation, and then approved by FCDOT. Refer to the RTAP Resources section of this document, or the [Fairfax FSS RTAP website](#), to review FCDOT's generic ballot, as well as an example of a tailored and improved ballot from a prior RTAP traffic calming project. Note that currently unoccupied properties and bank-owned properties can and should be removed from the balloting area. Ask around and report any ineligible properties to FCDOT. Remember, unless removed those properties will count as "No" votes.

Voting is carried out by either mailing in a completed ballot or emailing a photo of the ballot. You will need to decide how to distribute the ballot, either by mailing it or by delivering it door to door. Be aware that all costs for ballot printing and mailing are your responsibility, but that failing to provide return postage for the ballot could result in people not returning it. Remember that a ballot that is not returned is considered a "No" vote. FCDOT will not automatically give you the names associated with the addresses in your voting area. As it seems more likely people will open an envelope with a name on it, you can request names. However, this list may be out of date and some envelopes may bounce back. Work with your District Supervisor and FCDOT to get the most current information.

The voting period is full of unknowns. Trust that you have raised enough awareness about the dangers or you can continue to advocate for the plan! Going door to door or having a chalk festival are a few examples of additional outreach.

## Fairfax Family for Safe Streets RTAP Resources

You can download this current version of this guide, as well as additional resources at the Fairfax Families for Safe Streets RTAP Resource Guide page:

<https://novasafestreets.org/rtap-resource-guide/>

Please let us know if you have feedback on this Guide, or have additional resources you think others might be useful to share with others. We will update the Guide and our RTAP resources as we incorporate community feedback and as new information becomes available, however, the following is a list of some of the materials that are currently available online.

Questions? For more information: [chris@novafss.org](mailto:chris@novafss.org)

### Examples of Resources available on our RTAP page:

1. General Information:
  - a. How FCDOT defines houses eligible for voting:  
"The ballot area comprises residences and businesses on the street identified for traffic calming and residences and businesses on other streets whose sole or primary access is the street identified for traffic calming, and who would be considerably inconvenienced if they chose an alternate route."
  - b. FAQs explaining in plain language to your community the RTAP process, how to vote, the value of traffic calming and more <https://fairwaydrive.org/faq>
  - c. Information on traffic calming benefits and equity impacts
2. Traffic Calming Device Options
  - a. Descriptions of device options (speed humps, speed lumps/cushions, speed tables, raised medians, and chokers)
  - b. What's the difference between a speed hump and a speed bump?
  - c. Information on speed cushions
3. Example Materials from Other RTAP Traffic Calming Projects
4. RTAP Traffic Calming on Fairway Drive (Reston) – Project Website:
  - a. <https://fairwaydrive.org/>